

LA CROSSE TRIBUNE (WI)
8 November 1983

Former CIA official tells of 'unjust' practices

By ROBIN JENKINS
Special to the Tribune

A former CIA official Monday night in La Crosse accused that agency of "not doing its job in terms of protecting our national security interest — in fact, it's lying to us a lot."

"It's doing things the American people would not approve of if they knew the truth, and it's getting us in big trouble."

John Stockwell talked to about 250 students and faculty members at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. A former case officer for the CIA and former National Security Council adviser during the Ford administration, Stockwell is an outspoken critic of the CIA and of American foreign policy.

In his own words, Stockwell claims to have "the dubious distinction of being the highest-ranking CIA case officer to go public and say 'the emperor has no clothes.'"

He has written a best-selling book on the subject of CIA activities, titled "In Search of Enemies," and has appeared on several television programs. Stockwell's appearance here was part of UW-L's Lectures and Concerts series.

Stockwell admits that his decision to work for the CIA came from a number of influences, one being his own youthful naivete, which was in turn influenced by World War II, U.S. propaganda movies and the desire to "do the right thing."

"It was before Vietnam and before Watergate," explains Stockwell. "The media was not doing the job it is today on discussing what the government is up to. I didn't know the truth about my government and about what it was capable of doing."

The invitation to join the CIA came to Stockwell in 1964, two years after he completed active duty with the Marine Corps' 2nd Force Reconnaissance Co. "A letter came in the mail one day to my home," recalls Stockwell, "asking for my permission — my concurrence in their doing a background check with the objective of offering more employment. The thought did not occur to me then that the CIA does all kind of checking on all kinds of people without asking their permission."

According to Stockwell, the purpose in sending the letter was that the CIA believed a Marine captain such as himself would probably be receptive to the idea.

"I thought it was a wonderful thing. This was 1964: President Kennedy had just been shot. We were at the height of the Cold War, when the domino theory was prevalent. Nations were falling in Asia, in the Caribbean and in Africa, and it was soon going to roll right up through Central America until California and Colorado went communist. And we pretty well believed this — at least, I did."

After training, Stockwell was assigned to six years in West Africa — a region he had grown up in as a child.

There, he eventually became a chief-of-station operator. Stockwell claims he was involved in little heinous CIA activity during this time. He admits, however, having recruited a young national citizen to serve as his "eyes and ears." Stockwell sent the young man to visit a cousin who was believed to be a revolutionary. When a plot was hatched, both cousins were arrested and put to death.

"I thought about that a lot," comments Stockwell. "This was a beautiful young man. There had been no plotting in the country before he started seeing his cousin. This was a pro-Western country — one that was strong and friendly to the U.S. There was no justification for the CIA being there."

Reflecting on his six-year tour in Africa, Stockwell concludes that he had not seen the CIA "doing anything (in West Africa) that in any way advanced, or protected or defended the United States national security interest."

After spending time in a number of positions in West Africa, in Washington, where he recruited "special access agents," and in Vietnam, where he worked with the CIA's "invisible government," Stockwell was appointed chief of the Angola Task Force — an advisory group in the Ford administration.

The position involved the organization of a secret war to displace the national government in Angola. Stockwell claims to have been amazed at what he termed the ignorance of many advisers on the subject of Africa. It was his observation that even the highest-ranking officials, such as Henry Kissinger, had only a layman's understanding of the situation in Angola, and in Africa as a whole.

In 1977, Stockwell resigned from the CIA, leaving his position as a National Security adviser, and began working on "In Search of Enemies."

One of the immediate problems that confronts Stockwell is the amount of freedom he is allowed in discussing and reporting his participation in CIA activities. Since many documents concerning CIA operations are still classified, Stockwell is restricted from an in-depth treatment of his activities, whether in speech or in print.

He is under a Supreme Court injunction, which requires CIA approval of any books or articles written on covert CIA activities. If Stockwell fails to comply with this restriction, he could go directly to jail without trial. This restriction is somewhat less confining for lectures, since it is difficult for the court to control spontaneous comments.

As a result, Stockwell has taken to the lecture circuit to "inform the American public of the CIA's unjust policies and procedures."

In a final, jocular remark, Stockwell muses that "as long as I remain a public figure and continue to speak out a lot, I'm safe."